



BAY PINES VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

2020 - 2021 BIANNNUAL REPORT

Contents

Message from the Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer	Page 2
System Snapshot	Pages 3-4
Locations and Community-Based Outpatient Clinics	Page 5
Highlights	Page 6
Advancing Oncology Care Through Research and Collaboration	Pages 7-8
Navigating the Coronavirus Pandemic	Pages 9-14
Caring for Female Veterans	Page 15
VA Community Care	Page 16
Access to Care	Pages 17-18
Comprehensive Care for our Most Vulnerable Veterans	Pages 19-20
Successes in Whole Health	Page 21
Partnering to Feed Tampa Bay	Page 22
Moving Forward	
Integrated Clinical Community Projects Coming Soon	Page 23
Construction and Renovation Improvements	Page 24

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Executive Leadership Team

Paul M. Russo, Director/Chief Executive Officer

Kristine M. Brown, Deputy Director

Elamin M. Elamin, M.D., Chief of Staff

Carrie Hawkins, Associate Director for Patient and Nursing Services

Jonathan Benoit, Associate Director

Joseph Scotchlas, Assistant Director

Message from the Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer



It has been my honor to serve Veterans and lead the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System throughout some of the most challenging times in recent history. Through it all, we stayed true to our mission to serve America's Veterans. We remained steadfast in our efforts to heal and protect the most vulnerable. We overcame challenges to ensure we're doing our level best in caring for those who provide care to our Veterans. And we continued to provide high-quality health care during our ongoing battle with the Coronavirus.

Over the past two years, I have had the pleasure of working with the best in health care. It is clear to me that our workforce is committed to the VHA mission to provide exceptional health care and service to Veterans and their caregivers. I am proud of our staff and proud to be part of this team.

Our partnerships with various community members, Veterans Service Organizations, the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, our Congressional offices and other stakeholders, contributed to our successes in a large way. I thank all of you for your contributions and support. It is my belief that we will continue to achieve great progress while working with those who share our passion to serve Veterans.

Since I became Director/Chief Executive Officer at Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, my workforce philosophy is "None of us is as good as all of us." Working together is the key to accomplishing our mission. I believe this spirit of teamwork is derived from communication and engagement that is bi-directional, collaborative, and results-driven. I am committed to this vision and believe we can achieve anything we put our minds to by working productively together in service to our Veterans and their caregivers.

I would also like you to know that I am steadfast in my resolve to put Veterans' interests first, empower employees to help them deliver high-quality care and excellent customer service, continue to improve the Veteran experience, and remove

barriers which impede good customer service. We made great strides in all of these areas, despite the challenges we faced under pandemic conditions. You'll read more about our accomplishments and goals throughout this report.

Further, I am eager to see the positive change that will continue at the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System in the years to come. In fiscal years 2022 and 2023, we will continue our focus on programs and services designed to improve the quality and delivery of the health care our Veterans deserve and have earned through their service to our country. Significant physical plant renovation and new construction is occurring, and community care clinic expansion is in process.

The greatest limiting factors for us to provide services are staff turnover and recruitment. Both have become more challenging than ever with the pandemic for all hospitals. Nurse and physician shortages do impact operations negatively. We are actively working to make strides in talent recruitment and retention, to improve processing times for Veterans who receive benefits for travel, and to plan for the implementation of VA Secretary-level modernization efforts.

Since 1933, we have provided care to the Veterans of Pinellas County and Southwest Florida. This could not be achieved without the unwavering support from Congressman Bill Young, who fought for the necessary resources during his many years in Congress. The hospital bears his name in honor of his dedication and commitment to America's Veterans. In the spirit of Congressman Young, our staff and volunteers continuously display the same dedication and commitment to our mission.

In closing, it is an honor for me to serve as Director/CEO and I look forward to our continued success in serving America's Veterans, their families, and their caregivers.

Sincerely,
Paul M. Russo, MHA, FACHE, RD
Healthcare System Director/CEO

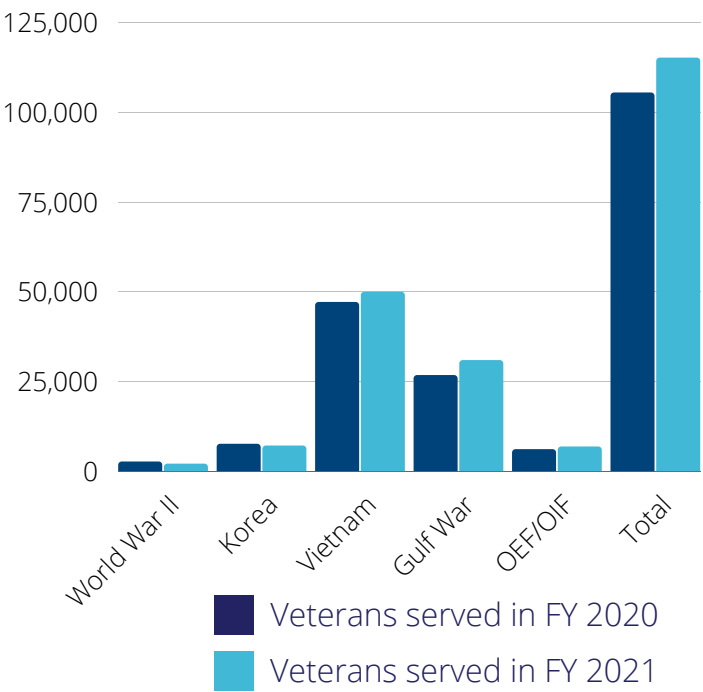
Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Snapshot

About Us

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (BPVAHCS) is one of the nation's largest 1a tertiary healthcare facilities, caring for Veterans residing across ten counties in the Southwest region of Florida. We were proud to serve more than 105,000 Veterans in FY 2020 and more than 115,000 Veterans in FY 2021.

Our healthcare system includes nine facilities: C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center located in Bay Pines, Lee County Healthcare Center located in Cape Coral, and seven outpatient clinics located in Bradenton, Naples, Palm Harbor, Port Charlotte, Sarasota, St. Petersburg, and Sebring. We employ more than 4,500 health care professionals and we are accredited by The Joint Commission and more than 10 additional accreditation and certification organizations.

Veterans Served by Conflict

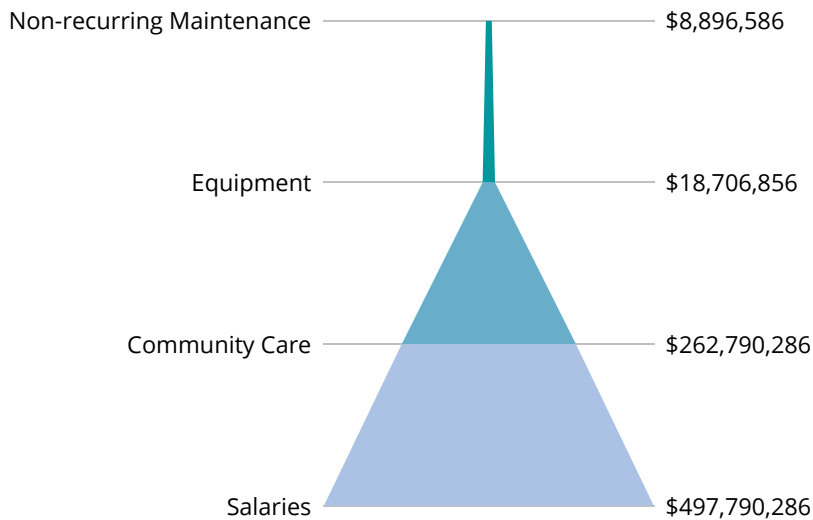


Accreditations and Certifications

- The Joint Commission
- Commission of Accreditation on Rehabilitation Facilities
- Commission on Cancer
- Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care
- Human Rights Campaign Foundation
- College of American Pathologists
- American Association of Blood Banks
- Food and Drug Administration
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- National Health Physics Program
- Association for Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs
- Designated Leader in LGBTQ Healthcare Equality by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Snapshot

Fiscal Year 2020 closed with a balanced budget.



Healthcare System Budget: \$1.2 Billion

Veterans Served: 105,431

Outpatient Visits: 766,926

Hospital Admissions: 11,878

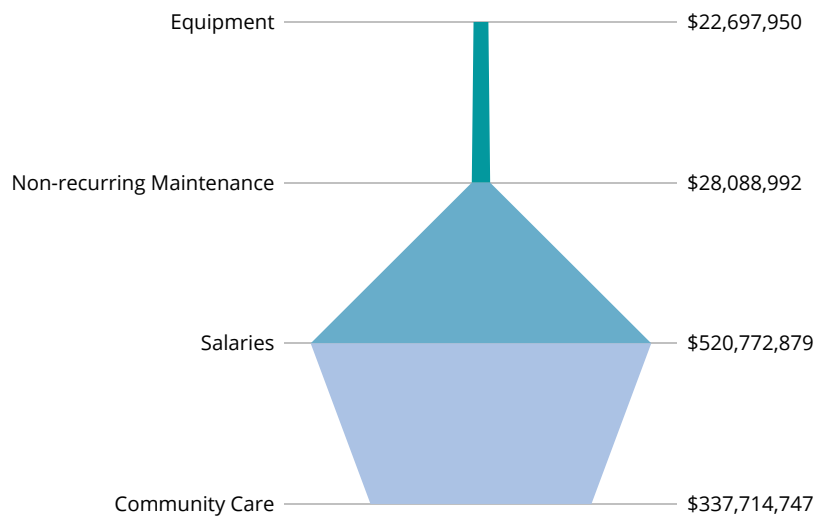
Employees: 4,923

Research Funding: \$1.2 Million

COVID-19 Funding: \$102,913,135

The list of expenditures is not all inclusive. Shown is a snapshot common to healthcare systems.

Fiscal Year 2021 closed with a balanced budget.



Healthcare System Budget: \$1.3 Billion

Veterans Served: 115,136

Outpatient Visits: 924,744

Hospital Admissions: 12,851

Employees: 4,845

Research Funding: \$1.9 Million

COVID-19 Funding: \$157,079,609

The list of expenditures is not all inclusive. Shown is a snapshot common to healthcare systems.

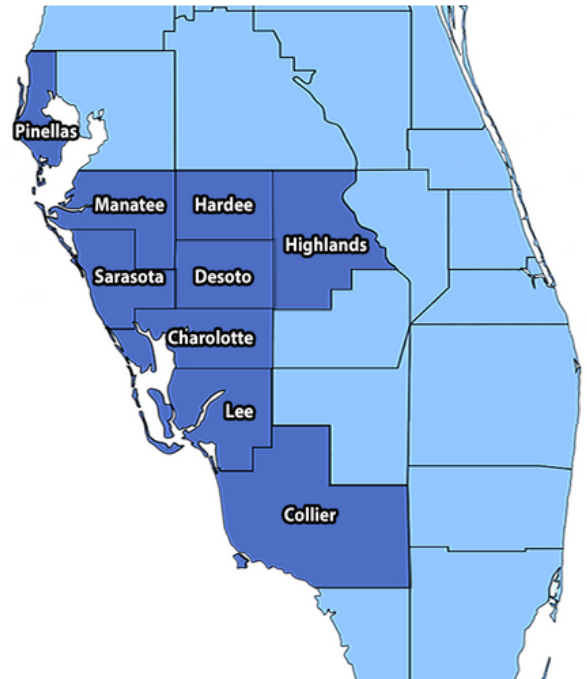
Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Locations



**C.W. Bill Young VA
Medical Center**
727-398-6661



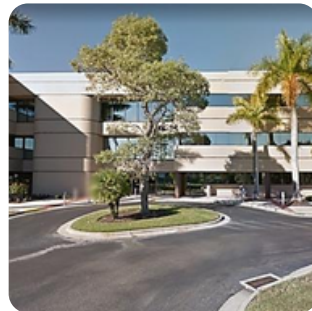
**Lee County Healthcare
Center**
239-652-1800



Community-Based Outpatient Clinics



Bradenton
941-721-0649



Naples
239-659-9188



Palm Harbor
727-734-5276



Port Charlotte
941-235-2710



Sarasota
941-371-3349



Sebring
863-471-6227



St. Petersburg
727-502-1700

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Highlights

150

Academic affiliations and partnerships with colleges, universities, and professional education institutions.

94

Contracts with local organizations that provide emergency shelter to Veterans who have significant health issues or experience substance abuse and chronic homelessness.

288,600

Text messages sent via VetText to schedule COVID-19 vaccine appointments.

1,398,453

Pounds of laundry processed through our state-of-the-art laundry facility for VA healthcare centers across the state.

53,000

COVID-19 tests administered to community partners and VA facilities across the state.

4

Star rating on the VA quality rating for the Community Living Center and Hospital Compare ranking.

100

Percent response rate to all Veteran concerns, questions, and comments received by the Patient Advocate Team.

1,282

Community members who volunteered to assist our health care providers and Veterans.

Advancing Oncology Care Through Research and Collaboration



Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Chief of Staff (right), radiation oncology program physicians (left), and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough (center) discuss Bay Pines VA's efforts in setting the bar for cancer care across the VHA during the Secretary's visit to the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center in Bay Pines, Fla.

Bay Pines is the first Veteran Health Administration facility to have a main agreement with NRG Oncology Foundation, Inc.

This is a first in VHA's history.



A Bay Pines VA Healthcare System radiation oncology staff member demonstrates using the state-of-the-art technologies the team uses to provide world class, comprehensive cancer care to Veterans.

In 2021, BPVAHCS took unprecedented steps toward improving cancer care for Veterans through the implementation of three unique and complimentary initiatives: the establishment of a VISN 8 Lung Precision Oncology Program (LPOP), the negotiation of a Main Membership agreement with NRG Oncology, and the formation of a pilot program to adopt Moffitt Cancer Center's Thoracic Oncology Clinical Pathways.

In March 2021, we were selected as a spoke site in the establishment of a VISN 8 LPOP, which is a component of the VHA's Precision Oncology program that aims to give VA clinicians a range of tools to proactively address and treat lung cancer in Veterans. The VISN 8 LPOP program is a collaborative effort between the Miami VA Medical Center, James A. Haley VA Medical Center and the Moffitt Cancer Center.

In July 2021, we entered into a Main Membership agreement with the NRG Oncology Foundation, Inc., to advance the long-term goal of increasing access to ground-breaking clinical research trials for Veterans diagnosed with cancer. This agreement was the first of its kind, stand-alone Main Membership agreement between NRG Oncology and any VA Medical Center. All prior agreements between VA Medical Centers and NRG Oncology represented Affiliate Membership status for each respective VA Medical Center. NRG Oncology brings together the National Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project, the Radiation Therapy Oncology

Group, and the Gynecologic Oncology Group, which are each recognized internationally as a leader in research.

NRG Oncology Main Membership gives Veterans at Bay Pines VA access to the National Cancer Institute's National Clinical Trials Network (NCTN), thus providing access to clinical trials, educational resources, expert guidance, and opportunities to collaborate on cancer research that will benefit Veterans as well as the community at large. NCTN clinical trials help to establish new standards of care, set the stage for approval of new therapies by the Food and Drug Administration, test new treatment approaches, and validate new biomarkers.

Also in 2021, Moffitt Cancer Center and Bay Pines VA embarked on a collaboration to pilot an approach to oncology care where Bay Pines VA oncology physicians will use Moffitt's Thoracic Clinical Pathways to guide treatment decisions and facilitate referrals for clinical trials and other specialized services when it is warranted.

As firsts in Bay Pines VA's history, these strides in research, development, and oncology care aim to increase the number of Veterans enrolled in clinical trials, increase access to specialized treatments offered to Veterans, and advance the ways in which Veterans receive state of the art oncology care within our healthcare system.

Navigating the Coronavirus Pandemic

Marking an unprecedented time in our country's recent history, the coronavirus pandemic had a profound impact on our communities throughout 2020 and 2021. Despite this, many of the challenges our Veterans, their loved ones, and our staff would have faced were mitigated due to the collective efforts of the Bay Pines VA team.

Charged with three major lines of effort – continuing health care operations, surging and reallocating resources to provide care to Veterans with COVID-19, and executing the most logistically complex vaccination effort in Bay Pines VA's history – staff quickly rose to the occasion. *(Continued)*





A laboratory and pathology staff member processes a batch of samples to test for the COVID-19 virus at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center in Bay Pines, Fla. Bay Pines VA consistently led the state in the amount of, and turn-around time for, COVID-19 testing.

During 2020 and 2021, Bay Pines VA seamlessly transitioned to virtual care while working hard to keep or reschedule appointments, elective surgeries, and medical procedures, during times when infection rates were at peak highs. The required shift in the way we delivered health care led to a permanent expansion in access to care and a new norm. Bay Pines VA successfully fully integrated virtual care through video and telephone modalities, giving Veterans many choices of which health care delivery method they preferred. Additionally, a partnership between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Federal Communications Commission assisted our most vulnerable and rural Veterans in accessing video and smart technology devices. This partnership aided in bridging the technological divide and ensured all Veterans would be able to receive the highest quality of care possible not only during the pandemic, but as we move forward.

At the highest rates of COVID-19 community transmission, the Bay Pines VA team implemented Surge Capacity Plans which aided leaders in their ability to increase intensive care unit capacities to accommodate up to 75 Veterans at a time in carefully constructed, infection-controlled wards in the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. Furthermore, these plans allowed staff throughout the healthcare system to be realigned and trained to meet the demand and rise in inpatient census. Emergency hiring authorities-

were authorized, which enabled leadership to quickly augment staff in multiple sections. These sections ranged from housekeeping and infection prevention areas of expertise, to laboratory technicians, nursing staff, specialty providers and many areas in between. Ultimately, the realignment and augmentation of resources enabled our team to continue hospital operations while simultaneously providing care for Veterans battling the disease.

An integral part of providing for the well-being of Veterans and staff, and safe-guarding the community, included our support to multiple FEMA Mission Assignments (MAs). MAs were primarily requested in support of non-VA organizations and state governments. Of note, BPVAHCS consistently led the Veterans Health Administration in testing and processing times while concurrently lending testing support through MAs to more than 20 community partners and Florida state Veteran nursing homes. From 2020 - 2021, the team processed more than 53,000 COVID-19 tests for non-VA community partners, contributing to the overall efforts in tracing and containing the virus. Staff were also sent throughout the state on education and training missions, equipment was loaned to non-VA entities, and inpatient beds were set aside for non-Veteran patients to support community hospitals that no longer had space to care for those ill with the virus.

(Continued)





Lee County Healthcare Center staff prepare COVID-19 vaccines in Cape Coral, Fla. Throughout the pandemic, Bay Pines VA's vaccine waste rate remained among the lowest in the nation at 0.003%.

December 23, 2020 marked the beginning of the most logistically complex vaccination efforts in BPVAHCS' history.

For months leading up to the date that the first COVID-19 vaccine shipment arrived, Bay Pines VA's Incident Command stood up a special cross-functional team of experts to assist in planning and executing how the healthcare system could quickly, safely, and seamlessly administer the maximum number of vaccinations possible in the shortest amount of time. This included foresight and planning to procure state-of-the-art equipment that was often limited in supply and in high demand from organizations around the nation that had similar goals with navigating the pandemic. Special ultra low freezers were required to store and handle the vaccine; supplies were needed to ensure strict safety protocols were closely followed; various items were needed to transport the vaccine within Bay Pines VA facilities across the state; round the clock temperature and monitoring equipment was required in places where the vaccine was stored and prepared; and back-up power and specialized laboratory equipment to process tests in mass quantities were essential to this effort. Simultaneously, the group was engaged in planning a multi-faceted communications

and education campaign designed to inform Veterans that Bay Pines VA was among the first in the nation to receive the vaccine, combat the misinformation environment, and reassure Veterans their safety was paramount.

Within hours of the first vaccine shipment, Bay Pines VA staff administered the first batch of vaccinations. Veterans in the Community Living Center on the Bay Pines VA campus, and the staff who work there, became among the first to be vaccinated against the coronavirus. The first protected members of the surrounding communities. The first individuals with the tools to fight the virus from within.

On March 24, 2021, President Joe Biden signed the SAVE LIVES Act into law, granting the BPVAHCS team the authority to vaccinate all Veterans, regardless of health care enrollment status, as well as their spouses, caregivers, and CHAMP VA beneficiaries. This was an unprecedented act of legislation which quadrupled vaccine operations immediately.

The Incident Command team rose to the occasion. Efforts to bring the vaccine into communities where Veterans and their families lived and worked continued in hopes to protect as many individuals as possible. In the months that followed, the team held nearly 100 vaccine outreach events along Southwestern Florida. Staff at all of Bay Pines VA's facilities continued in their diligent and steadfast mass vaccination efforts and round-the-clock preparation and administration of the vaccine continued.

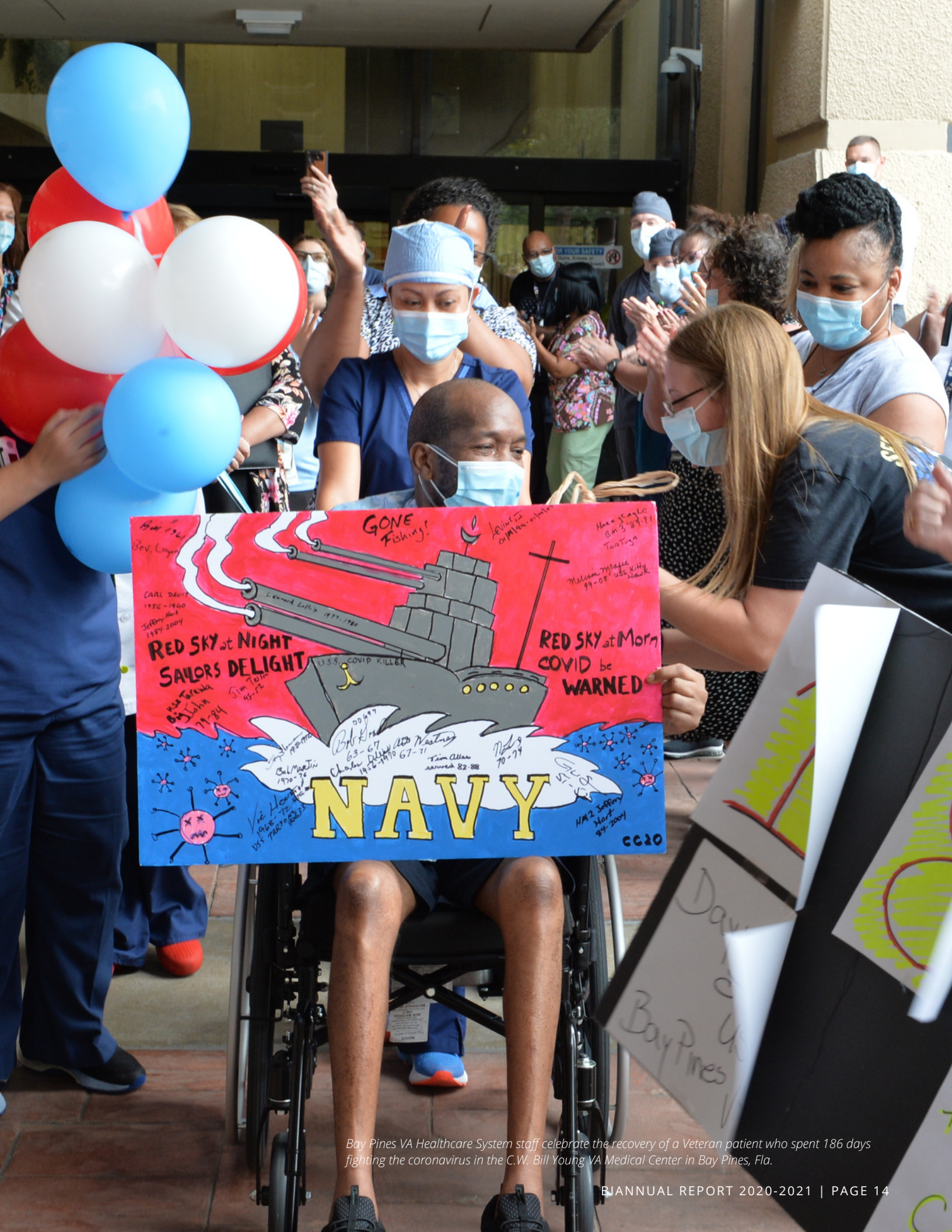
Throughout the pandemic, Bay Pines VA consistently ranked among the top three healthcare systems in the nation to administer the highest number of vaccinations to Veterans, their families, and healthcare system staff members.

By the end of 2021, the Bay Pines VA team vaccinated nearly 120,000 individuals against the coronavirus.

A feat that resulted in countless lives saved and ultimately contributed to a downward trend in community transmission of the virus in the months that followed.



COVID-19 vaccination operations staff prepare Veterans, who are physically-distanced and grouped in six, to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at a mass vaccination event on the Bay Pines VA campus in Bay Pines, Fla. Mass vaccination events vaccinated upwards of 1,500 Veterans per day around the Southwestern region of Florida and were seamlessly executed, with Veterans remaining on site for an average of 20 minutes. This time included the required 15-minute observation period to ensure Veterans were not adversely affected by the vaccine.



*Brain 1961
Rev. Logan*

*CARL Davis
1950-1960
Jeffrey Hall
1984-2004*

**RED SKY at NIGHT
SAILORS DELIGHT**

*Joe Talaraka
Big John
77-84*

*Jim Tatum
44-72*

Leonard Lilly 1977-1980

U.S.S. COVID KILLER

*DOH 99
BkR K...
63-67
Chadwick 1962-1970 67-71
Tim Allen
sawatch 82-88*

*RED SKY at Morn
COVID be
WARNED*

*Have Eagle
On 3-24-71
Tara Toga*

*Levin 72
aplan...-1970*

*William M... with
99-09*

NAVY

*Bel Martin
1970-76*

Joe 70-74

*HA2 InfBry
Mark
84-2004*

CC20

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System staff celebrate the recovery of a Veteran patient who spent 186 days fighting the coronavirus in the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center in Bay Pines, Fla.

Caring for Female Veterans

Bay Pines VA is striving to meet the unique needs of female Veterans. In fiscal years 2020 - 2021, we served nearly 15,000 female Veterans, an increase from previous years.

These fiscal years led to a rigorous campaign to enroll female Veterans into our Women Veterans Program and educate health care providers on caring for their unique needs. Our proactive, comprehensive efforts led to the following:

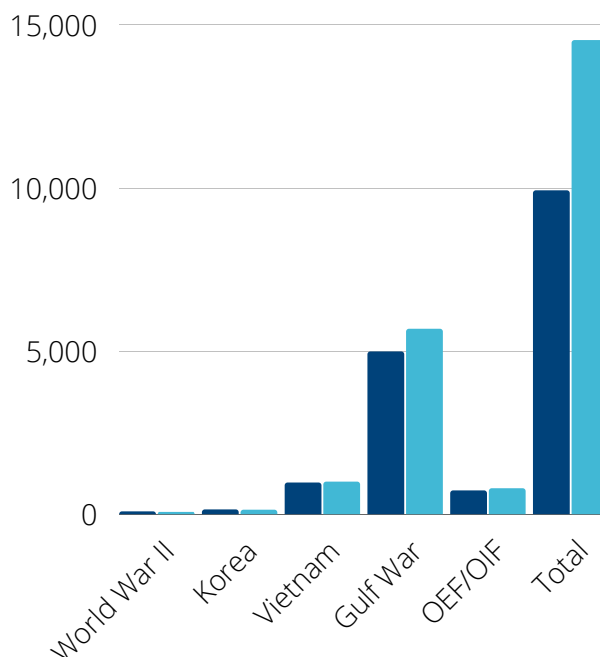
- An increase in outreach engagements and listening sessions with female Veterans.
- An increase in female-focused health care provider staff.
- An inclusive, multi-disciplinary approach to care that includes primary and specialty care, Whole Health concepts, mental health, and social support.
- The start of constructing a physical facility located on the Bay Pines VA campus to serve as a central location for female Veterans to receive high-quality, personalized care.

12.9%

The expected growth of female Veterans enrolling in Bay Pines VA every five years.

Female Veterans by Conflict

■ Veterans served in FY 2020
■ Veterans served in FY 2021



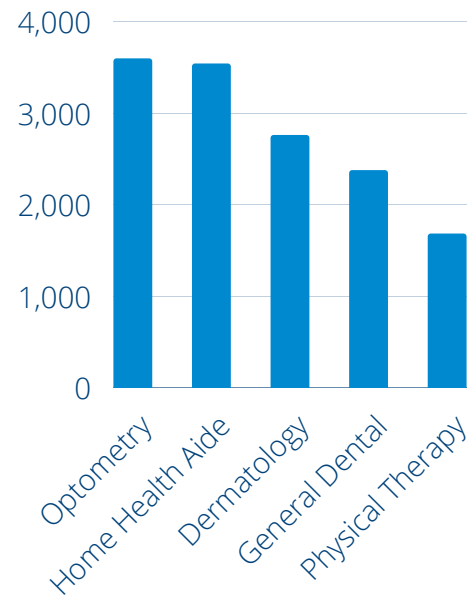
VA Community Care

VA provides health care for Veterans outside of VA from providers in our local community. Veterans may be eligible to receive care from a community provider when VA cannot provide the care they need. Certain conditions, eligibility requirements and the specific needs and circumstances are considered when determining whether a Veteran would benefit from community care. The Bay Pines VA Community Care central office staff are located at the Largo Business Office in Largo, Fla.

64,233

**Total outpatient consults
to VA Community Care for FY 2020**

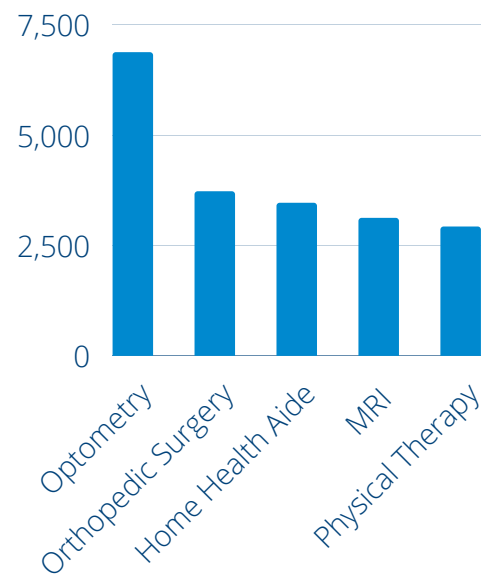
The top five health care areas were optometry, home health aide, dermatology, general dental, and physical therapy.



72,507

**Total outpatient consults
to VA Community Care for FY 2021**

The top five health care areas were optometry, orthopedic surgery, home health aide, MRI, and physical therapy.



Access to Care

Bay Pines VA is proud to serve our Veterans. In fiscal years 2020 - 2021, we provided primary care services, mental health services, social work services, specialty care services, and more to approximately 220,000 Veterans.

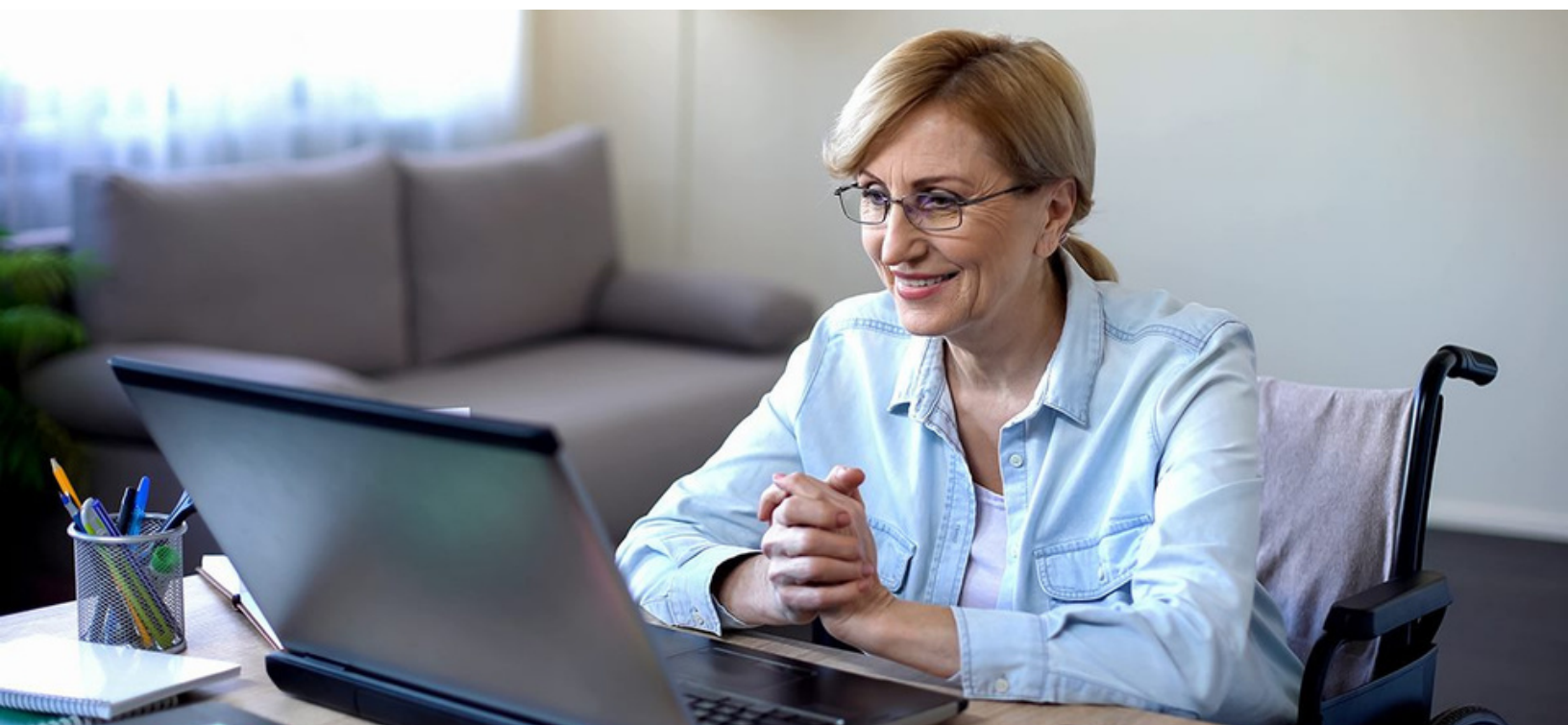
VA made it easier for Veterans to get seen through expanding and investing in telehealth, offering transportation to VA facilities, focusing on groups with increased access to care issues and tracking access to care data. By tracking our access to care data, we can evaluate and improve upon the processes in place, which ensures we're providing the most timely and high-quality care to our Veterans.

In FY 2020 and FY 2021, our healthcare system served 42,647 and 113,147 Veterans via telehealth appointments, respectively. This allowed Veterans to connect with their providers without the hassle of travel and ensured they were able to keep themselves safe in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also offered training and equipment to Veterans who did not know how to operate the technology for telehealth through our Veterans Education Resource Center.

As the community transmission of coronavirus decreased, we continued to increase our transportation services. BPVAHCS is proud to have provided Veterans with transportation to and from their appointments, including transportation to receive their COVID-19 vaccinations. This service proved especially useful to Veterans who may have difficulty getting to their appointments due to living in a remote location, living independently, or who may have trouble with mobility due to their health conditions.

We also continued to offer urgent care services via community providers, in lieu of Emergency Department care, primary care, and specialty care, when urgent issues arose, to ensure Veterans have immediate and proximate access to care 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Our healthcare system is continually striving to provide our Veterans with the care they've earned and deserve, and we will keep working to ensure Veterans have access to care where they need it, when they need it.



***"The service from the VA
is unbeatable."***

***- U.S. Army Air Corps
Sgt. David Mattoli, WWII Veteran***



Comprehensive Care for



During a visit to the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System's main campus, the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough (center) discusses top VA priorities, which include combating Veteran homelessness, and the positive impacts the Bay Pines VA team made in assisting Veterans who experience homelessness.

Combating Veteran Homelessness

Caring for our most vulnerable populations is of utmost importance, particularly during the emergent crisis of the worldwide pandemic.

Through the collaboration with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), during FY 2020 Bay Pines VA aided 225 Veterans in finding permanent supportive housing and an additional 308 were placed in transitional housing. The following year, 249 Bay Pines Veterans were housed with HUD-VASH and an additional 263 were placed in transitional housing. Overall, in FY 2021 Bay Pines VA housed 1,087 out of 1,318 (82.47%) unhoused Veterans in HUD-VASH.

HUD-VASH expands our ability to provide Veterans who are experiencing homelessness access to community resources. It combines HUD housing vouchers with VA supportive services to help Veterans who are homeless, and their families, find and sustain permanent housing.

Additionally, Bay Pines VA offered a comprehensive portfolio of services designed to aid Veterans on their journey to rehabilitation. Our Community Engagement and Reintegration Service, in conjunction with our community partners, provide Veterans with access to substance abuse counseling, mental health services, housing assistance, employment programs, and more.

In fiscal years 2020 - 2021, 575 phones were distributed to unhoused Veterans to ensure they were able to connect with services that are vital to their rehabilitation at a moment's notice. Furthermore, 147 free rides were provided to unhoused Veterans via VA's Ride Share program. This facilitated easier travel to medical appointments, homeless shelters, food pantries, and many other rehabilitative services.

Ending Veteran homelessness is one of VA's top priorities and Bay Pines VA will continue working to help accomplish that mission.

our Most Vulnerable Veterans

Combating Veteran Suicides

Seventeen. That's the number of Veterans who lose their lives to suicide each day in the United States. Although one suicide is too many, the number of Veteran deaths by suicide continues to decrease with ongoing suicide prevention efforts that utilize a public health model. We believe our suicide prevention efforts are making a difference.

Bay Pines VA has made great strides to ensure Veterans who are at risk of suicide, and those who care for them, have the tools needed to recognize the warning signs and seek treatment. In addition to expanded mental health services and community outreach, the staff at Bay Pines VA implement an evidence based approach through use of a two-phase suicide screening and evaluation process.

Veterans identified as high-risk for suicide receive additional support within our system. In FY 2020, the monthly average for Veterans identified as high-risk was 279. In FY 2021, the monthly average for Veterans identified as high-risk was 247.

This reduction suggests a decrease in Veterans with high-risk symptoms, which is correlated to the increased monitoring and access to mental health services facilitated by our Suicide Prevention Team.

If a Veteran is deemed to be at high-risk for suicide, one of the 10 clinicians on our Suicide Prevention Team (SPT) will work with the Veteran to develop and complete a suicide safety plan, and ensure a referral is made to the correct level of care. In addition, the SPT member will ensure follow up services are in place prior to the Veteran's discharge from the medical facility. All team members are trained to assist our Veterans with accessing medical and mental health outpatient services. Bay Pines VA looks forward to hiring four more highly-qualified mental health clinicians, which will enhance the quality of care we are able to provide to our Veterans.

One of the many tools we use to assist high-risk Veterans is our Recovery Engagement and Coordination for Health – Veterans Enhanced Treatment (REACH VET) Program. REACH VET is an initiative that is unique to our healthcare system, which uses data analysis to identify Veterans who could be at risk of an adverse outcome. It allows providers the opportunity to reach out to a Veteran, evaluate their current plan of care, and identify if their care could be enhanced. This further solidifies the safety net designed to assist Veterans who could be at risk.

Additional suicide prevention initiatives developed here during FY 2021 include the Suicide Prevention and Pharmacy Lethal Means Safety Project Innovation Grant Program. With this new program, Veterans who have overdosed on prescription medications are offered safe medication solutions by our Pharmacy Mental Health Team, to include medication lock boxes, pill bottles with locking caps, and pill bottles with timer caps.

The Suicide Prevention Program works very closely with the Veteran's Crisis Line. In FY 2020, the program received 1,595 referrals and in FY 2021 the program received 1,836 referrals, which further aided in Bay Pines VA's ability to provide proper resources to our high-risk Veterans.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the SPT conducts additional outreach efforts for high-risk Veterans who have screened or tested positive for COVID-19. This helps us ensure Veterans receive access to proper and timely health care and allows us to assess for increased stressors related to the pandemic.

The Bay Pines VA's Suicide Prevention Program remains committed to enhancing and ensuring care for the unique needs of our high-risk Veterans.

If you or someone you know is struggling with thoughts of suicide, please contact the Veterans Crisis Line by calling 800-273-8255 and pressing 1, or send a text message to 838255.

Successes in Whole Health

The onset of the coronavirus pandemic brought new challenges for everyone. However, with the challenges come new opportunities to regroup and refocus. Bay Pines VA's Whole Health Program integrated virtual and in-person modalities to provide our Veterans and staff many opportunities to explore their values, address goals, and learn new skills.

During fiscal years 2020 and 2021, the Whole Health team made significant strides in focusing on the whole person with programs for both Veterans and staff. The programs offered were designed to help individuals take control of their health and well-being through the innovative use of mixed technologies and in-person engagements and were available at every facility throughout our healthcare system.

The Veteran Whole Health program focused on core tenants like mindful awareness, prevention, treatment, and community. It was designed to go beyond Veterans' illnesses and disabilities to help them create the life they wanted by focusing on their goals and priorities.

Veteran Whole Health engagements included MOVE! weight loss classes, tobacco cessation courses, relaxation/mindfulness group sessions, self-care individual/group sessions, recreation (movement), and art therapy sessions. These classes and sessions were free for all enrolled Veterans through their primary care teams.

Veterans' Whole Health care was also augmented by access to an innovative smart technology application called *Live Whole Health (LWH)*. LWH includes resources, goal-setting tracking, and more. The program was rounded out with touchpoints between

Veterans and health care providers to monitor and track growth and progress over time. An equally important tenant of the program - Employee Whole Health - was designed with health and resiliency in mind. It represented a proactive model of well-being that protected against the stressors and challenges staff faced in their day-to-day lives.

A tenet of this program was the Employee Well-Being Response Team. The Employee Whole Health Program team, in partnership with the Chaplain Service, created this team and made resources available to staff who needed psychological counseling and/or spiritual support. Health care providers administered 15 – 20 minute telephone counseling for staff upon request, weekly virtual sessions on mindfulness, weight loss support, tobacco cessation, meditation, and provided wellness refresh items to help staff rest and recharge throughout the year.

Ultimately, Whole Health combined conventional and complementary approaches to care which were individualized by Bay Pines VA health care providers and continually adapted as progress was made and goals were refined. The community that continues to exist brings connection through aspiration and purpose, while supporting true work and life integration.



Partnering to Feed Tampa Bay



Bay Pines VA Healthcare System staff, Community Veteran Engagement Board members, and representatives from Feeding Tampa Bay stand in front of the food distribution truck on the Bay Pines VA campus in Bay Pines, Fla. This collaborative team effort brought food and nutrition education to Veterans in need.

During fiscal year 2021, Bay Pines VA's leadership team and our Community Veterans Engagement Board worked to secure a grant from Feeding America that allows us to provide food to diabetic Veterans living in Pinellas County who are food insecure. The grant provides 40 Veterans with access to the program for a duration of three months at a time. Veterans receive four \$25 vouchers each month. These vouchers are designated to be exchanged for fresh produce and other items that are provided on a weekly basis by Feeding Tampa Bay's Grocery on the Go truck.

Veterans who are enrolled in the program are asked to participate in the wellness, nutrition, and cooking classes provided by our Whole Health and Nutrition Services. Enrolled Veterans and their families begin with a Healthy Eating and Living Class. They are also given the option to be followed by Nutrition and Whole Health staff for additional support.

Sixty-four Veterans participated in the program during FY 2021, receiving more than 220 boxes of food. One Veteran reported losing 46 pounds due to improved nutrition and daily walks with his wife. Other Veterans noted their enjoyment cooking and experimenting with new ingredients, then sharing their new skills and meals with their families. We hope to continue this partnership and appreciate all involved with helping our Veterans.

Moving Forward

Integrated Clinical Community Projects Coming Soon

Expansion of Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (SARRTP)

Bay Pines VA approved the expansion of the Substance Use Disorder program by 30 beds and 14 employees. This will increase access and reduce the need for community consults for Veterans in residential programs. Additionally, it will reduce the wait list for inpatient substance abuse treatment.

Pathology and Laboratory Improvements

Bay Pines VA's pathology and laboratory services plans to extend laboratory hours at our community based outpatient clinic locations, realign their systems, and add 21 employees. These initiatives will decrease processing times for new point-of-care lab services and enable consistent patient care practices throughout the entire healthcare system.

Expanded Access to Radiology Services

Bay Pines VA's radiology services added Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) devices, a Computed Tomography (CT) mobile trailer, and will be hiring additional employees. Once fully operational, these state-of-the-art additions will expand access to imaging services at C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center and the Lee County Healthcare Center, which will nearly double the capacity of Veterans we're able to serve.

Coordinated Cancer Care Unit Initiative

Bay Pines VA plans to form a multi-disciplinary team to provide coordinated care for Veterans with cancer. With the anticipated addition of 17 dedicated employees, the coordination will begin at the point of diagnosis and will continue with treatment to survivorship.

Mental Health Intensive Case Management Expansion

Bay Pines VA plans to add additional employees to ensure Veterans with severe and persistent mental health conditions will be offered intensive case management. This includes assistance with sustained living in their communities, services to promote self-esteem and self-efficacy, and a supportive program for Veterans who are hospitalized then discharged to the community.

Construction and Renovation Improvements

Fiscal years 2020 and 2021 kicked off more construction and renovation projects than in recent history.

Below is a list of projects awarded or anticipated to be complete. All are designed to help us better serve our Veterans.

Construction Underway on the Bay Pines VA Campus

- Construction of a state-of-the-art **laundry facility**, which will serve Veteran healthcare centers across the state. Completed in 2021.
- Renovation of the **Sterile Processing Services**, which will increase efficiencies across the spectrum of health care. Estimated date of completion is late 2022.
- Renovation of **inpatient care** wards, which will streamline inpatient care services. Estimated dates of completion are late 2022 and 2024.
- Groundbreaking of a **second Fisher House**, which will allow us to care for the families of Veteran patients who are receiving long term care at the C.W. Bill Young Medical Center. Estimated date of completion is mid-2023.
- Physical expansion, renovation, and relocation into building one for all **Primary Care** clinics on the Bay Pines campus, which will enable us to expand access and consolidate services into one location. Estimated date of completion is late 2023.

In Development

North Pinellas Community Based Outpatient Clinic

Services: Primary care, mental health, women's health, EKG service, social work, audiology, pharmacist consultation, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and referrals to specialty care.

Location: Clearwater, FL

Anticipated completion date: Mid-2022

Geriatric Clinic

Services: Primary care services for geriatric Veterans.

Location: Bay Pines VA Campus

Anticipated completion date: Early 2024

Women's Clinic

Services: Whole health, primary and specialty care services for women Veterans.

Location: Bay Pines VA Campus

Anticipated completion date: Late 2024

Dental Clinic

Location: Bay Pines VA Campus

Anticipated completion date: Early 2024

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

10000 Bay Pines Blvd., Bay Pines, FL, 33744
727-368-6661

www.va.gov/bay-pines-health-care
Find us on social @VABayPines